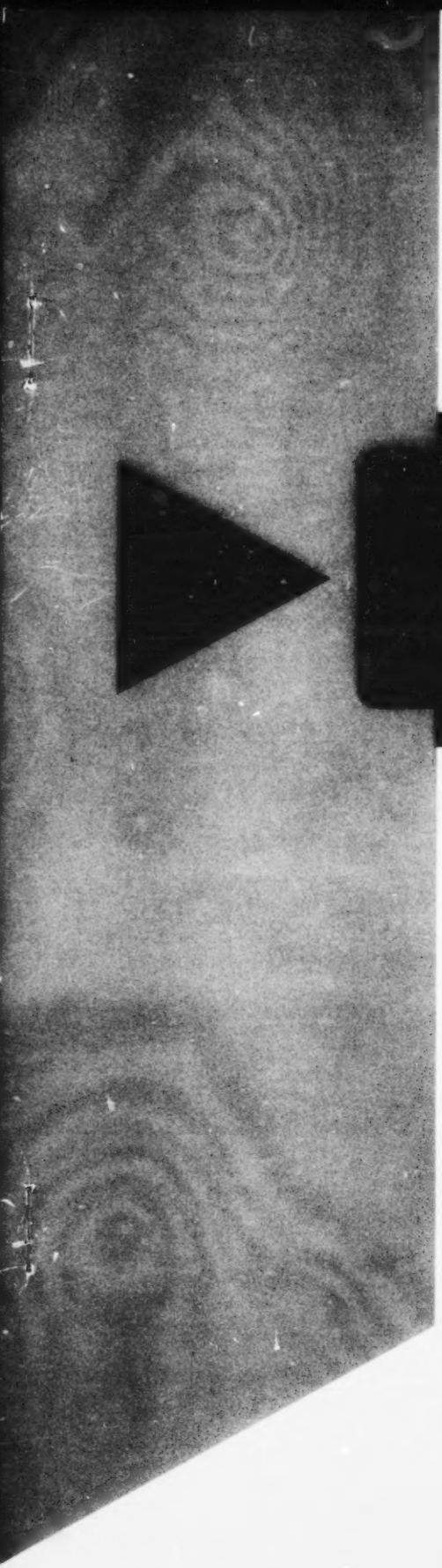

ERN RAMPE

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DE DÉVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL

POLICY CONCEPTS

THE COOPERS & LYBRAND CONSULTING GROUP

Employability Resources Network

The Employability Resources Network (ERN) is a three-year demonstration project funded by Employment and Immigration Canada under the Innovations program.

ERN is the responsibility of three organizations: The Canadian Council on Social Development, The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group, and The Norton Group.

ERN's purpose is to explore and evaluate methods for helping unemployed people get off social assistance and back into the job market, through employability programs currently under way across Canada.

ERN will select at least 10 to 15 demonstration projects for an in-depth evaluation of the different approaches used to help social assistance recipients and others re-enter the labour force. It will assess the projects' effectiveness for different groups, such as older unemployed workers, women, native people, disabled persons, visible minorities and youth.

ERN will establish a standardized framework for evaluating employability enhancement projects. The framework will provide useful information not only for government policy-makers, but also for business, social service and employment agencies, and program administrators.

ERN will develop an information resource centre. It will include an inventory of national and international employment projects, an evalution data base and a documentation library. A communications network will serve organizations and individuals in the employment enhancement field.

The Employability Resources Network,
55 Parkdale Avenue,
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Demonstration Evaluation: Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group
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Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi

Le projet Ressources pour l'amélioration des possibilités d'emploi (RAMPE) est un projet témoin d'une durée de trois ans financé par Emploi et Immigration Canada dans le cadre du programme Innovations.

Trois organisations assument la responsabilité de RAMPE : le Conseil canadien de Développement social, Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group et Le Norton Group.

Le mandat de RAMPE est d'explorer et d'évaluer, dans le cadre de programmes d'amélioration des possibilitiés d'emploi ayant cours dans l'ensemble du Canada, différentes formules pouvant aider les chômeurs à se soustraire à l'aide sociale et à réintégrer le marché du travail.

RAMPE sélectionnera dix à quinze projets témoins pour évaluer minutieusement les différentes stratégies favorisant la réinsertion des assistés sociaux et d'autres personnes sur le marché du travail. Il appréciera l'efficacité des projets visant différents groupes tels que les chômeurs d'un certain âge, les femmes, les autochtones, les handicapés, les minorités visibles et les jeunes.

RAMPE élaborera un schéma d'évaluation destiné aux projets d'améloiration des débouchés. Ce schéma fournira des renseignements utiles non seulement aux décideurs politiques du gouvernement, mais aussi aux entreprises, aux organismes de services sociaux et d'emploi, et aux administrateurs de programmes.

RAMPE créera également un centre national de documentation. Celui-ci comprendra l'inventaire des programmes d'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi mis en place au Canada et à l'étranger, une base de données sur l'évaluation et un centre de documentation. Un réseau de communication sera à la disposition des organismes et des particuliers qui s'occupent de l'amélioration des perspectives d'emploi.

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91-05081/

REPORT ON THE EVALUATION STUDY OF THE MIRAMICHI JOB DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

April 27, 1989

Edition I

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group has completed an evaluation study of the Miramichi Job Development program (MJD). The study was carried out on behalf of the Employability Resource Network (ERN) and focused on nine major issues which were identified during an earlier evaluation assessment study. In Exhibit 1 these nine issues are presented. As well, the overall conclusion to each issue is summarized.

In this Executive Summary we first of all overview the major conclusions of our study which led to our recommendations for program change. We then overview additional conclusions which resulted from our data. The pages of the report related to the conclusions and recommendations are referenced.

Evidence relating to MJD's overall effectiveness includes:

- the academic skills of participants were strengthened (pages 7 and 8);
- their vocational focus was sharpened (pages 8 and 9);
- participants reported a strengthening of selected life skills and social related work skills (page 9);
- job search skills were strengthened (page 9 and 10); and
- MJD participation significantly improved the clients' abilities to gain employment (page 10).

Overall, we concluded that MJD is preparing employment disadvantaged persons for the work force and assisting them in finding employment.

Based on the above, we recommend the continuation of the program, should an ongoing need for this type of training exist in the region.

We also noticed selected aspects of the program and its outcomes which warrant concern. These are now discussed.

The types of jobs now gained by clients following MJD participation tend to be short term and insecure (pages 10 and 11). Program related features which contribute to this outcome include:

- the jobs targeted by the MJD program during job search activities tend to be short term and susceptible to changes in the economy (pages 10 and 11); and
- the MJD program does not sufficiently focus on the skills

considered to be highly important by employers (pages 19 -25).

We recommend, as a means of improving MJD, more effective networking with long term employers by MJD officials, targeting more appropriate employment sectors in the job search phase of the program and increasing the emphasis placed during the program on the skills employers value.

Program activities in response to the employment barriers experienced by clients are less effective than they should be. Specifically, the intensity of most of the barriers we examined increased after program completion (pages 12 - 16).

We recommend increased efforts by MJD staff to identify these barrier in participants and more pro-active activities to assist clients in identifying and overcoming the influences of these barriers.

The final aspect of the program which we feel warrants ongoing attention is the manner in which the program focuses on employment, as opposed to training (pages 41 - 45). Employers and MJD staff feel that the employment focus of the program is more important and beneficial than the training focus of the program. This emphasis and balance will be at risk if the New Brunswick Community College assumes control of the program.

We, therefore, recommend the maintenance of selected key features of the program if and when NBCC's responsibilities increase.

We also developed a number of conclusions to the evaluation issues which did not lead to recommendations concerning program change. These included:

- program participation did not impact on changes in the longer term financial dependency of clients (pages 18 - 24);
- increases in income are evidenced following MJD participation (pages 28 - 29);
- MJD does not contribute to savings in Social Assistance programs (pages 32 - 37);
- MJD has lower per diem seat costs than many alternative programs in the Miramichi region (pages 37 - 40); and
- if MJD officials were faced with the necessity to reduce the duration of the program, the most likely element to eliminate would be academic training (pages 40 -41).

The following exhibit further summarizes the evaluation issues and conclusions reached:

Exhibit 1. Evaluation Issues and Summarized Conclusions

Issues	Summarized Conclusions
1. Did the program enhance the "employability" (employment readiness) of the participants?	Yes
2a. What barriers to employment specific to SAR's did this training program reduce?	None
2b. What features of the program addressed these barriers?	None
3. Was participant longer term dependency on financial assistance programs reduced as a result of program completion?	No
4. Did the training provided in the program correspond to skills participants required:	
• to gain employment;	Not Sub-stantively
• to maintain employment; and	
• on program entry	
5. Are there incremental financial benefits for project participants?	Yes
6. Are there savings to social assistance programs because of client participation?	No
7. Is this program more or less costly than other employment training programs accessible to participants?	Less Costly
8. If the duration of the program were to be reduced, which components / activities should be maintained?	Computer Assisted Academic Training
9. What are the advantages of the "employment" versus "training" focus of the program?	Employers Value the Employment Focus

1.
INTRODUCTION

The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group has completed an evaluation study of the Miramichi Job Development program (MJD). This document represents our evaluation report. In this opening section we introduce the purpose of our evaluation study, describe the objectives, activities and target population of MJD, and review the methodology which was implemented to complete the evaluation study.

The Purpose of This Evaluation Study

The evaluation of the Miramichi Job Development program addressed a series of issues broadly related to the effectiveness and efficiency of MJD as an employability enhancement initiative.

This evaluation study is the second in a series of evaluations of employability enhancement projects across Canada under the Employability Resource network (ERN).

ERN was established as part of a larger initiative to identify and recommend projects or programs that could be considered as innovative demonstrations of social service interventions designed to help those welfare recipients who wish to work and become more employable.

Funded by Employment and Immigration Canada, the role of ERN is, in part, to establish a framework for evaluating employability enhancement projects across Canada.

This series of project evaluations is meant to contribute to the now limited body of data surrounding employability enhancement projects for Social Assistance Recipients (SAR's). Specifically, the data compiled through the ERN initiated evaluations is meant to address and answer selected major policy questions related to:

- the barriers to employment faced by welfare recipients in Canada;
- the measures that have been tried to remove or reduce these barriers;
- the relative success of these above measures for different categories of welfare recipients, taking into account such factors as age, education, and employment history; and
- the relative cost-benefit mix for employability enhancement projects or programs.

The results of these evaluations will become one part of a network of resources. The network that will include an EDP system, a growing inventory of information on employability projects in

Canada and a contact list of experienced resource people across the country. It is intended that this network will promote employment and self-sufficiency for welfare recipients across Canada.

Within this context the next section of this report introduces the Miramichi Job Development program.

The Miramichi Job Development Program

In this section we briefly review the goal, activities and target population of the MJD.

The MJD is located in the city of Newcastle, within the Miramichi region of New Brunswick.

Operated under the auspices of the Miramichi Region Development Corporation (MRDC), the MJD was originally focused around a curriculum program offered through a computer assisted employability instruction program. The computer system is known as PLATO. It was recognized by MRDC officials that this type of program might meet the needs of displaced workers in the region. Consequently, in 1986 the Miramichi Job Development Program began its first year of operations.

The goal of the MJD is to provide pre-employment training for severely employment disadvantaged individuals from the region and place them in employment or in employment directed training.

To achieve this goal the MJD undertakes the following program activities:

- orientation of participants;
- computer assisted academic upgrading;
- computer assisted life and work skill development and group support meetings;
- vocational guidance;
- computer assisted job search training and group support meetings; and
- job placement assistance and follow-up.

The MJD targets these activities at the severely employment disadvantaged individuals within the region. These individuals typically have problematic work habits, attitudinal and motivational problems, a serious lack of education or training and are functioning at less than a grade nine level.

Many of these target group persons face multiple barriers to employment. The most common of these are attitudinal/ motivational problems and a lack of education. The motivation of these individuals is considered to be low as a result of extreme frustration experienced with their inability to find and retain employment. The activities of MJD (detailed previously) attempt to reduce these barriers to employment.

The Evaluation Issues and the Study Methodology

NINE KEY ISSUES WERE ADDRESSED DURING THE STUDY

The terms of reference for this study were based on an Evaluation Assessment Study carried out earlier by The Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group.

During the evaluation of MJD, we addressed nine major issues relating to the impacts/effects, costs/benefits and the program alternatives of the MJD. These evaluation issues and brief summaries of our conclusions to each of them were previously presented in Exhibit 1. The evaluation issues are categorized by type in Appendix I of this report.

A MULTIPLE LINES OF EVIDENCE METHODOLOGY WAS IMPLEMENTED

To undertake this evaluation study the consultants completed a work program consisting of the following five major steps:

- Finalize Work Instruments and Arrange for Data Collection;
- Conduct Fact Finding;
- Analyze Data/Information;
- Develop Conclusions; and
- Report Evaluation Results.

The evaluation methodology involved the use of a multiple lines of evidence approach to fact finding. Such an approach relies on a variety of pertinent data sources in combination with a number of research methods to ensure that sufficient quantitative and qualitative information pertaining to each issue is captured. Such an approach, in our opinion, compensates for the absence of statistical testing which is frequently a part of single lines of evidence studies. That is, the consultants ensure the integrity of their conclusions to the issues through a multiple lines of evidence approach.

During the evaluation of the MJD the research methods employed included the following:

- interviews;
- file reviews;
- a focus group activity;
- telephone surveys;
- analysis of financial data; and
- a panel discussion with experts.

The research methods were implemented over a two week time period in the spring of 1989. The following information sources were accessed:

- The Evaluation Assessment Report;
- MJD files;
- MJD financial data;
- UI data banks;

- files from Employment and Immigration Canada on employability enhancement programs in the area;
- income assistance data;
- past MJD participants;
- MJD staff;
- Employment and Immigration Canada officials;
- local private sector training consultants;
- New Brunswick Department of Income Assistance officials;
- managers from the New Brunswick Community College;
- participants who withdrew or were dismissed from the program; and
- local employers.

Exhibit 2 illustrates the research methods and data sources which were applied to the broad issue categories involved in this study.

Further detail concerning the research methodology and data sources is provided in Appendix I of the report. Examples of the data gathering instruments are attached in Appendix II.

In the next section we present the findings and conclusions to the nine evaluation issues.

Exhibit 2. Data Sources Applied to Address the Evaluation Issues

TYPE OF ISSUE	DATA SOURCES		
	Impacts/Effects	Costs/Benefits	Alternatives
Evaluation Assessment	X		X
MJD Files	X		
MJD Financial Data		X	
Past Participant Telephone Survey	X		X
Interviews with: MJD Staff, EIC Officials, Training Consultants NB Dept. of Income Assistance NBCC Officials	X		X
Withdrawal/Dismissals from MJD Program (telephone interview)	X		
Telephone Survey, MJD Participants Who Took Additional Training	X		
UIC Data Banks	X	X	
Income Assistance Data	X	X	
EIC Program Files	X		
Telephone Survey of Employers of Past MJD Participants	X		
Focus Group with MJD Personnel	X		X
Panel of Experts: Risk Analysis			X

2. FINDINGS, ANALYSES AND CONCLUSIONS BY ISSUE

In this section we detail our findings analysis and conclusions to the evaluation issues. The presentation of this conclusions section is organized on the basis of the major categories of issues, namely, impacts/ effects issues, cost/ benefits issues, alternatives issues.

Impacts/Effects Issues

There were four issues addressed in our examination of the impacts/effects of the MJD project. They were:

- Did the program enhance the "employability" (employment readiness) of the participants?
- What barriers to employment specific to SAR's did the project reduce and what features of the program addressed these barriers?
- Was participant longer term dependency on financial assistance programs reduced as a result of program completion?
- Did the training provided in the program correspond to the work related social skills participants required?

Our conclusions to the above issues are now presented and discussed.

ISSUE 1: DID THE PROGRAM ENHANCE THE "EMPLOYABILITY" (EMPLOYMENT READINESS) OF THE PARTICIPANTS?

The consultants concluded that the MJD did enhance the employability of participants.

Exhibit 3 presents questions we researched in order to arrive at the above conclusion. In researching these questions, we employed the following methods for data collection:

- Reviews of the pre and post program Canadian Achievement Test (CAT) scores for a sample of 30 participants. This number represented 30% of the participants per operating year of the MJD program. The CAT measures the grade level equivalency of an individual, and, through test-retest procedures, provides an indication of the change in academic skill levels of the participants.
- Reviews of "My Vocation" test scores. This test measures the improvement in the attitude of individuals to employment. The focus of much of the employment training in the MJD is to improve participant confidence and perspectives toward employment. The "My Vocation" test scores provide an indication of the impact of this training.

Exhibit 3. Research Questions Associated with the Evaluation Issue "Did the Program Enhance the Employability (employment readiness) of the Participants?

1. What changes in the skills levels can be shown as a result of pre and post training test of participants?

2. Which job search technique skills do participants report are developed or improved as a result of training?

3. How many participants found employment

   - on completion of the program,
   - within one month, three months, six months or 1 year, or
   - did not initiate a job related activity?

4. What aspects of the employment plan were achieved at the time of program completion?

- a telephone survey of 90 participants which, in part, investigated perceptions concerning changes in their job search technique skills.

- MJD File reviews to determine the education level achieved by participants as well as their employment histories.

- UIC data bank reviews to acquire any additional information relating to the employment levels achieved by participants.

- telephone interviews with past MJD participants who received additional training following the program.

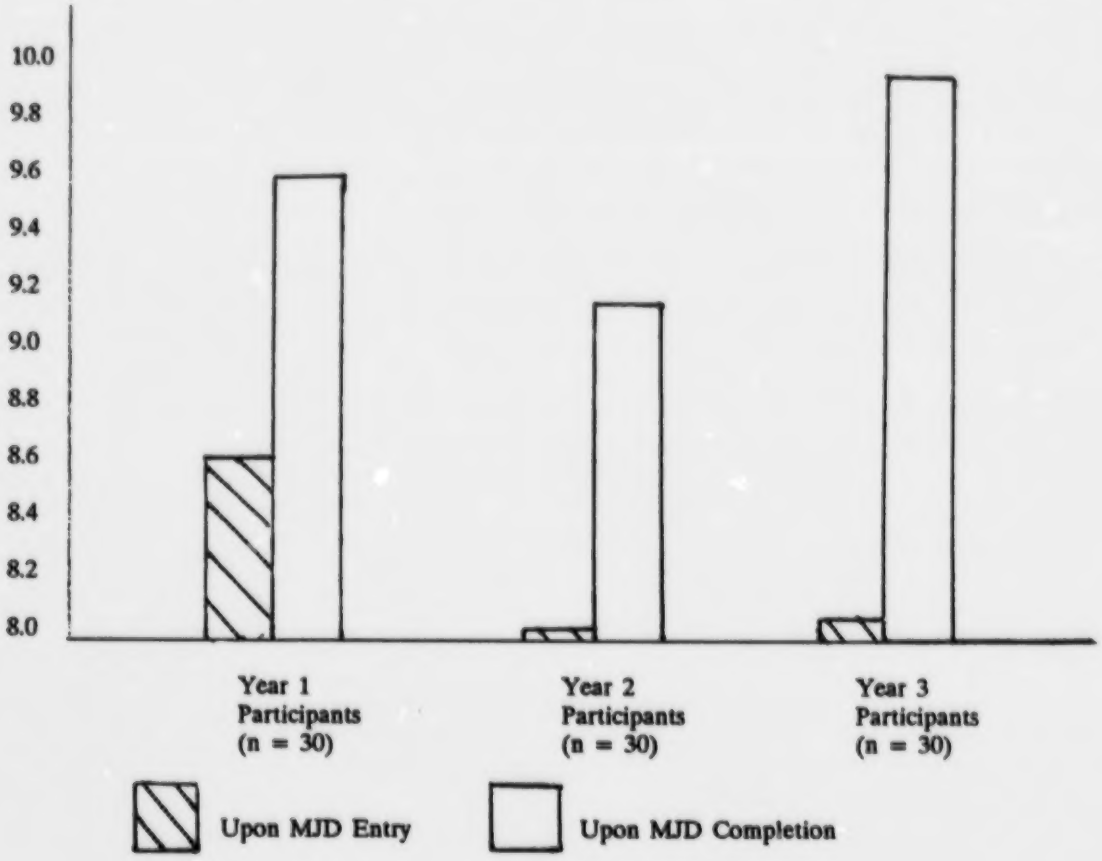
Our findings, analysis and conclusions resulting from the above are now presented.

Academic Skills Were Strengthened

Overall, the Canadian Achievement Test (CAT) scores analyzed for all program years revealed an average of one year advancement in grade level as a result of the computer assisted academic training. As indicated in Exhibit 4, a general upgrading of academic skills occurred for each of the three MJD groups.

In our opinion, this increase in academic skill levels represents a re-learning effect among the participants. Our research indicates that 40% of the MJD participants had completed grade XII (or achieved a higher education level) prior to entering the program. A further 19% had gained a grade XII equivalency diploma (GED). The substantially lower grade scores participants demonstrate upon MJD entry is most likely due to the effects of time between completing their academic training and entering MJD.

Exhibit 4. Change in C.A.T. Score Grade Levels



This retention deficit and the subsequent relearning effect is frequently noticed and reported in other adult academic upgrading programs (such as Basic Skill and Training Development programs sponsored by EIC).

Our conclusion concerning the relearning of academic skills by MJD participants was substantiated during our interviews with past MJD clients. They reported that the academic training was a good "refresher" course.

Participant's Vocational Focus Was Sharpened

Our file review showed the "My Vocation Test" scores also increased as a result of program participation. All three participant groups had an average pre-MJD score of approximately 10. This

average increased to between 14 and 17 during MJD participation.

This suggests the perspectives of individuals towards a vocation had become more positive and directed as a result of participation in the program. We attribute this change to the lifeskills development activities and to the vocational guidance provided during the program.

Life Skills and Work-related Social Skills Were Improved

Life skills and work-related social skills include the ability to solve problems, the ability to negotiate, self-confidence, motivation to work, etc. All of these have direct relevance to an individual's employability.

Telephone survey respondents were asked to rate how helpful they found the program in improving various life and work related social skills. To varying degrees all of the skills we questioned were rated as assisted. However, there were substantial differences in the types of skills which participants rated the MJD as "very helpful" in developing. Over 60% of the participants rated MJD as very helpful in developing the following skills:

- Self-confidence
- Ability to communicate
- Ability to negotiate

MJD was less often considered "very helpful" relative to increasing a participant's "ability to solve problems" (46%) and increasing their "motivation to work" (55%).

We are of the opinion that "self-confidence", "communication" and "negotiation" are life/social skills that relate to work and other (social) environments within one's life. Therefore, improvement in these skills impacts on a wide range of events in a participants' life. For this reason, increases in these skills would be perceived as more significant by participants.

"Problem-solving" and "the motivation to work", on the other hand, impact on a narrower range of a participants' activities (specifically on an employment situation). Therefore, an increase in these skills would be perceived as less significant by participants and, for this reason, received a lower rating from them.

Increases in Job Search Technique Skills Were Evidenced

Job search technique skills are more tangible than are life and work related social skills. These relate to "resume writing abilities", "finding job opportunities", and "the ability to talk about yourself during an interview".

Over 72% of the participants rated MJD as "very helpful" in developing the following skills:

- writing a resume,
- accurate completion of a job application, and
- contacting an employer by telephone

MJD was less often considered "very helpful" relative to increasing a participant's "ability to get to know potential employers" (47%) and their "knowledge of community resources to help get and keep a job" (42%).

In our opinion, "writing a resume" and "accurate completion of a job application" were rated as most improved by participants because of the technical nature of these skills. That is, they were practised during the MJD program, they can be performed in isolation from others, require attention to personal data with which the participant is highly familiar and demand little analytical effort.

For example, participants leave the program with an up-to-date resume. Therefore, keeping it current is merely a maintenance function.

Completing an application form is a skill also practised in the MJD program. Most employment application forms require the same information. Participants "learn" this information during the program which they are able to recall following MJD. The program curriculum also emphasizes the importance of accurately completing employment application forms.

Contacting an employer by telephone is practised extensively by participants at MJD. The participants are able to "script" an introductory statement that introduces them, states their objectives for the telephone call and sets up an appointment for an interview. Extensive rehearsal during the program routinizes this activity and makes it easier to carry out in the future.

On the other hand, the "ability to get to know potential employers" and "knowledge of community resources" are more difficult to learn and retain because of their interactive and analytical nature. That is, these skills require a degree of interaction with others and a high level of analytical or strategic thinking to utilize them effectively. These types of activities cannot be scripted and are difficult to "practice" in a classroom.

In summary, MJD appears to have been most helpful in developing those job search skills which are highly technical. MJD is less effective in developing analytical job search skills.

<u>High Post-MJD Employment Levels Were Observed</u>

Data from our file review indicated that prior to the three program years, a small percentage of participants were involved in full or part-time employment. Specifically, in years I, II and III there were 30%, 46% and 40% of our sample (n=30/year), respectively, who were employed before MJD.

Exhibit 5 indicates that a very high proportion of participants found employment within the first three months after leaving the program. In all three program years between 85% and 96% of participants found employment in this time frame.

These results clearly show a higher proportion of participants gained employment after MJD than before.

<u>Participants' Ability to Sustain Employment Did Not Improve</u>

While a significant number of MJD participants were successful in gaining employment, they showed far less of an ability to maintain their jobs. Our survey results indicate that 66% of those employed held their first job after MJD for a period of less than 6 months (24 weeks). A review of participants' job performance prior to MJD entry indicated that participants' averaged

Exhibit 5. Number and Percentage of Participants Who Secured Employment Prior to Program Completion and at Intervals Following Completion

Secure Employment	Year I	Year II	Year III
Prior to Program Completion	13 (48%)	11 (42%)	8 (36%)
After 1 month	8	7	9
3 months	2 (85%)	7 (96%)	4 (95%)
6 months	2	1	1
1 year	2		
Total (n = 30)	27 (90%)	26 (86%)	22 (73%)

21 - 24 weeks employment per job. Clearly, MJD participation did not enhance a clients' ability to maintain a job.

The inability of participants to sustain employment is, in our opinion, largely attributable to the fact that most of the jobs attained were in the Retail, Hospitality and Construction sectors. While these sectors offer entry level positions to the job market, they tend also to have high turnover rates. They are especially susceptible to swings in the economy. This suggests to us that MJD officials should focus on more stable jobs when counselling participants and when assisting them with their job search skills. The Job Developer on the MJD staff could play a major role in this change.

Very Few MJD Participants Went on to Further Training

Another indicator of the effectiveness of the MJD program in enhancing employability is the number of people who continued employment related training after completing the program. The telephone survey results indicate that only a small proportion (11%) did so. This is corroborated by our review of MJD files. Only 13% (from all years) were reported to have done so. The file review showed that of the 12 participants, 8 entered courses at the New Brunswick Community College and 3 took GED training. This supports the view that the MJD provided sufficient employability training to meet the job finding needs of participants.

Telephone interviews were conducted with 6 participants who undertook further

training to determine whether this training coincided with the career goals they established during the program. Most respondents indicated a desire to find full time employment and felt that additional training would assist them in meeting this goal.

In summary, we concluded that MJD participation enhances employability. Evidence to support this conclusion included:

- academic skills were strengthened (possibly because of relearning), as a result of the computer assisted training;
- the vocational focus of participants was sharpened as a result of the lifeskills training and vocational guidance elements of the program;
- selected lifeskills and work related social skills were considered by participants to have been improved during the program. The skills which were reported to have been most improved by the program were those that could be applied to both work and social situations;
- the MJD program was more effective in developing highly technical job search skills. Those job search skills which were analytical in nature were less so developed during the program;
- MJD participation significantly improved a client's ability to gain employment. However, no change was observed in the participants' abilities to maintain employment. This appears to be related to the nature of the jobs targeted by the MJD program. They tend to be short term and are susceptible to changes in the economy; and
- very few MJD participants completed further employment training programs.

ISSUE 2: WHAT BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT SPECIFIC TO SAR'S DID THE PROJECT REDUCE AND WHAT FEATURES OF THE PROGRAM ADDRESSED THESE BARRIERS?

The consultants concluded that employment disadvantaged SAR's and non-SAR's experience similar barriers to employment in the Miramichi region.

We also concluded that SAR's perceive some barriers to be more severe than non-SAR's.

Finally, we concluded that MJD participation does not appear to diminish the extent of these barriers for SAR's or non-SAR's.

Exhibit 6 presents the question we researched in order to arrive at the above conclusions.

In researching these questions we employed the following methods for data collection:

- a review of the Evaluation Assessment;
- a telephone survey of past participants;
- interviews with MJD staff, Employment and Immigration Canada officials, training consultants, New Brunswick Department of Income Assistance officials; and

- telephone interviews of 10 withdrawals/dismissals from the MJD program.

Our findings, analysis and conclusions resulting from the above are now presented.

Exhibit 6. Research Questions Associated with the Evaluation Issue "What Barriers to Employment Specific to SAR's did this training program reduce" and "What features of the Program Addressed These Barriers?"

---

1. Do SAR's report as a result of the program:
   - increased ability to make work related arrangements for family responsibilities, transportation and clothing,
   - an enhanced self-image;
   - gains in support by adult peers for their own initiatives associated with self-improvement?
2. Do SAR's report that the above were barriers to employment prior to course entry?
3. Are there differences reported by non-SAR's concerning the degree to which the above are barriers to employment?
4. Which program components and activities are judged to have been effective in reducing these barriers?

SAR's and non-SAR's Identified Four Barriers to Gaining Employmnent

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which selected lifestyle and environmental factors represented barriers to their abilities to gain employment. The items surveyed (i.e. potential barriers) are listed in Exhibit 7. Both SAR's and non-SAR's identified the following as barriers:

- babysitting arrangements,
- support (for their employment initiatives) from other adults,
- transportation arrangements for getting to and from work, and
- enthusiasm for work.

Exhibit 7. List of Potential Employment Barriers Rated By Survey Respondents

1. Getting to and from work.
2. Babysitting arrangements.
3. Support by other adults for your efforts to work.
4. Knowing people who could hire you.
5. Hearing about possible jobs from friends and acquaintances.
6. Job Opportunities in places you realistically can get to.
7. Confidence in yourself to approach someone for a job.
8. Education.
9. Work experience.
10. Enthusiasm for work.
11. Positive feelings about yourself.
12. Habits concerning use of alcohol.
13. Habits concerning use of drugs.
14. Confidence in speaking to someone in a position of authority.

Both groups (SAR's and non-SAR's) indicated that the remaining items in Exhibit 7 were not barriers to gaining employment.

Prior to conducting the evaluation study, we had evidence which suggested that the first three of the above barriers were unique to SAR's. However, our results indicate that employment disadvantaged persons in general regard all four of the above as barriers. We suspect that this is because most SAR's and non-SAR's who are employment disadvantaged:

- have family members for whom they must make child care arrangements;
- require and benefit from support by other adults when undertaking employment related activities; and
- in the Miramichi area, must make transportation arrangements to get to work.

Because of the high levels of unemployment in the Miramichi, many employment disadvantaged persons have experienced frustration associated with gaining employment, whether or not these persons were SAR's. Thus, both groups report "enthusiasm for work" to be a barrier to employment.

In summary, both SAR's and non-SAR's in MJD report the same factors as barriers to employment. These factors are, in our opinion, common to employment disadvantaged persons.

These Barriers Are More Intense to SAR's

While SAR's and non-SAR's report the same barriers to employment, SAR's rate three of the barriers as more of a disadvantage than do non-SAR's. Exhibit 8 summarizes the average rating to these barriers (1 - major disadvantage, 2 - somewhat of a disadvantage, 3 - neutral) of both SAR's and non-SAR's. The data shows that three of the barriers are rated as more of a disadvantage by SAR's whether before or after MJD participation.

Approximately 75% of the SAR's in MJD were female which could explain the difference between groups in the ratings given to the babysitting arrangement barrier. We are unable to explain the differences in the ratings for the remaining variables.

Exhibit 8. Mean Ratings of Employment Barriers

Barrier	Before MJD		After MJD	
	SAR	Non-SAR	SAR	Non-SAR
Babysitting arrangements	2.21	2.79	2.38	2.71
Support by other Adults	2.64	2.29	1.90	1.82
Enthusiasm for Work	2.63	2.82	1.45	1.50
Getting to and from work	2.41	2.63	No measure	

MJD Participation Did Not Reduce These Barriers Over the Long Term

Following MJD, the intensity of the majority of these barriers did not reduce. In fact, our survey respondents indicated that the intensity attributed to all but one of the barriers increased. This indicated to us that the MJD program did not respond, over the longer term, to the employment barriers experienced by SAR's or other employment disadvantaged persons.

In our opinion,the increased intensity of the barriers following MJD is linked to the high levels of emotional support and understanding participants experience during the MJD program. The MJD environment is very supportive to participants. They are able to discuss their personal situations including employment barriers with staff during private counselling sessions and with other participants. Similar support structures are not usually as available when the participants are subsequently "on the job". Therefore, they would have less assistance in overcoming these barriers after MJD and the barrier wold be perceived as more of a disadvantage.

Ability to Maintain Employment May be Impacted

The increasing intensity observed in these barriers may also play a part in the participants' inability to maintain employment (as reported earlier in this document).

It is widely known that low work enthusiasm can lead to poor performance, to subsequent dismissal, or to a participant's desire to leave the job in search of more attractive opportunities.

The increased intensity of these barriers may result in lower levels of enthusiasm for work and contribute to a MJD participant's inability to maintain employment.

In summary, even with MJD's attempts to develop work skills and to simulate the workplace (through an "employment focus") they could not fully prepare participants for the more alienating features of their future entry level jobs.

In summary, we concluded that SAR's do not exhibit any unique employment related barriers, in comparison to non-SAR's. However, SAR's perceive the intensity of some barriers to be more severe than do non-SAR's. MJD participation does not appear to diminish these barriers. Evidence to support these conclusions included:

- four barriers to employment were reported by both SAR's and non-SAR's. These appear to us to be barriers specific to employment disadvantaged persons in the Miramichi area;

- SAR's rate three of these barriers as more severe than do non-SAR's. The three barriers are babysitting arrangements, enthusiasm for work and getting to and from work;

- for both SAR's and non-SAR's, the intensity of the barriers (except in one instance) increased after participants completed MJD. We feel that this was due to the high level of emotional and interpersonal support participants received at MJD in comparison to their subsequent work situation; and

- the increased intensity of these barriers could contribute to the inability of the MJD participants to maintain employment.

ISSUE 3: WAS PARTICIPANT LONGER TERM DEPENDENCY ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS REDUCED AS A RESULT OF PROGRAM COMPLETION?

The consultants concluded that post MJD changes in dependency could not be attributed to the program.

Exhibit 9 presents questions we researched in order to arrive at the above conclusion.

Exhibit 9. Research Questions Associated with the Evaluation Issue "Was Participant Longer Term Dependency on Financial Assistance Programs Reduced as a Result of Program Completion?

1. How many clients were dependent on social assistance and/or UI payments prior to entry?

2. Of those who were, how many received social assistance and/or UI payments within the following time periods after course completion:

   - 6 months,
   - 1 year,
   - 2 years?

3. For how many weeks were the above payments received in the 2 years prior to and following the course?

4. To what degree did the remaining participants receive social assistance or UI?

For the purposes of our analysis, dependency was defined as a recurrent pattern of reliance on UI and Income Assistance.

We employed the following methods to collect information relevant to this issue:

- reviews of the UI data bank,
- reviews of the Income Assistance data, and
- reviews of MJD participant files.

To collect financial data from UI and Income Assistance officials we provided them with a list of names of all past MJD participants. Data was provided to us in a manner that assured anonymity for participants who had received Income Assistance payments. Therefore, we were unable to link Income Assistance data to individuals. We were, however, able to analyze, at an aggregate level, their dependency during the years before and after MJD participation. For a small sample of UIC recipients (n=18) we were able to track dependency precisely as it corresponded to their MJD participation.

With these limitations as the context, we now present our key findings.

MJD Participants Have a History of Dependency on Income Support Programs.

Exhibit 10 details the number of MJD participants who received UI and Income Assistance over the past five years. On the average, 30% of the participants received UIC and 42% received income assistance.

This confirms that the target group of MJD consists largely of individuals who have been reliant on some form of income support since 1984/85.

Exhibit 10. Number and Percentage of UI and Income Assistance Recipients

MJD Year	No. UI Recipients	No. Income Assistance Recipients	Total No. of MJD Participants
1986/87	29 (37%)	25 (32%)	78
1987/88	26 (29%)	32 (35%)	91
1988/89	15 (23%)	34 (51%)	66

No Consistent Trend in Dependency Change Occurs Immediately Following MJD Participation

Comparisons of dependency change in the year following MJD completion were possible for the 1986/87 and 1987/88 participants. These comparisons are summarized in Exhibit 11 and further detailed in Exhibits 12 and 13. These exhibits indicate that the 1986/87 participants, in the year following the program, showed a higher proportion of UI recipients, an increase in the UI dollars paid to recipients and an increase in the average number of weeks in which UI was paid to recipients. At the same time, these 1986/87 participants, in the year following the program, showed a decrease in the proportion receiving Income Assistance and a decrease in the number of weeks Income Assistance was received.

Exhibits 11, 12 and 13 also indicate that the 1987/88 participants, in the year following the program, show decreases in three of the above dependency indicators, no change in one indicator and an increase only in the number of weeks Income Assistance was received. In short, there are no consistencies between the 1986/87 and 1987/88 MJD groups in terms of changes in income support payments they received following program participation.

We concluded, on the basis of the above data, that MJD participation did not impact on income support dependency.

Dependency on Income Assistance Has Been Generally Decreasing Before Program Entry

Upon further analysis of our data, we found that all MJD clients (regardless of their year of participation in the program) have been reducing their level of dependency on Income Assistance since at least 1986/87. This tendency is demonstrated in:

- Exhibit 11. The 1986/87 MJD group shows a decrease in the percent of participants who receive Income Assistance in the year following program participation. The 1987/88 MJD group does not show an increase in the percent receiving

Income Assistance in the year following program participation;

- Exhibit 13. Reductions in the number of participants receiving Income Assistance in 1988/89 in comparison to 1986/87 are evidenced in the 1986/87 and 1987/89 MJD groups. As well, the average number of months per year participants are dependent on Income Assistance decreases from 1986/87 to 1988/89, regardless of the year of MJD participation; and

- Exhibit 14. The total number of Income Assistance dollars paid to MJD participants (regardless of their year of program participation) decreases from 1986/87 to 1988/89. This is to be expected given the Income Assistance information provided in Exhibits 11 and 13.

However, we do not attribute this decrease in Income Assistance dependency to the program because the trend began prior to the program participation for two of the three MJD groups (i.e the 1987/88 and 1988/89 groups).

We concluded that post MJD changes in dependency could not be attributed to the program. Evidence to support this conclusion included:

- a high proportion of MJD participants have been dependent on income support programs over the past five years;

- no consistent trend is shown in the degree to which MJD participants are dependent on income support in the year following their completion of the program; and

- the trend of decreasing dependency on Income Assistance support which is evidenced by program participants appears not be related to MJD participation. Income Assistance payments to participants began to decrease in the year prior to program entry.

ISSUE 4: DID THE TRAINING PROVIDED IN THE PROGRAM CORRESPOND TO THE WORK RELATED SOCIAL SKILLS PARTICIPANTS REQUIRED?

The consultants concluded that MJD staff do not sufficiently focus on all of the critical employment related skills which are important to employers. Consequently, MJD participants do not work well under minimal levels of supervision.

Exhibit 11. Percentage of Participants Dependent on UI and Income Assistance For 1986/87 and 1987/88 Participants Groups

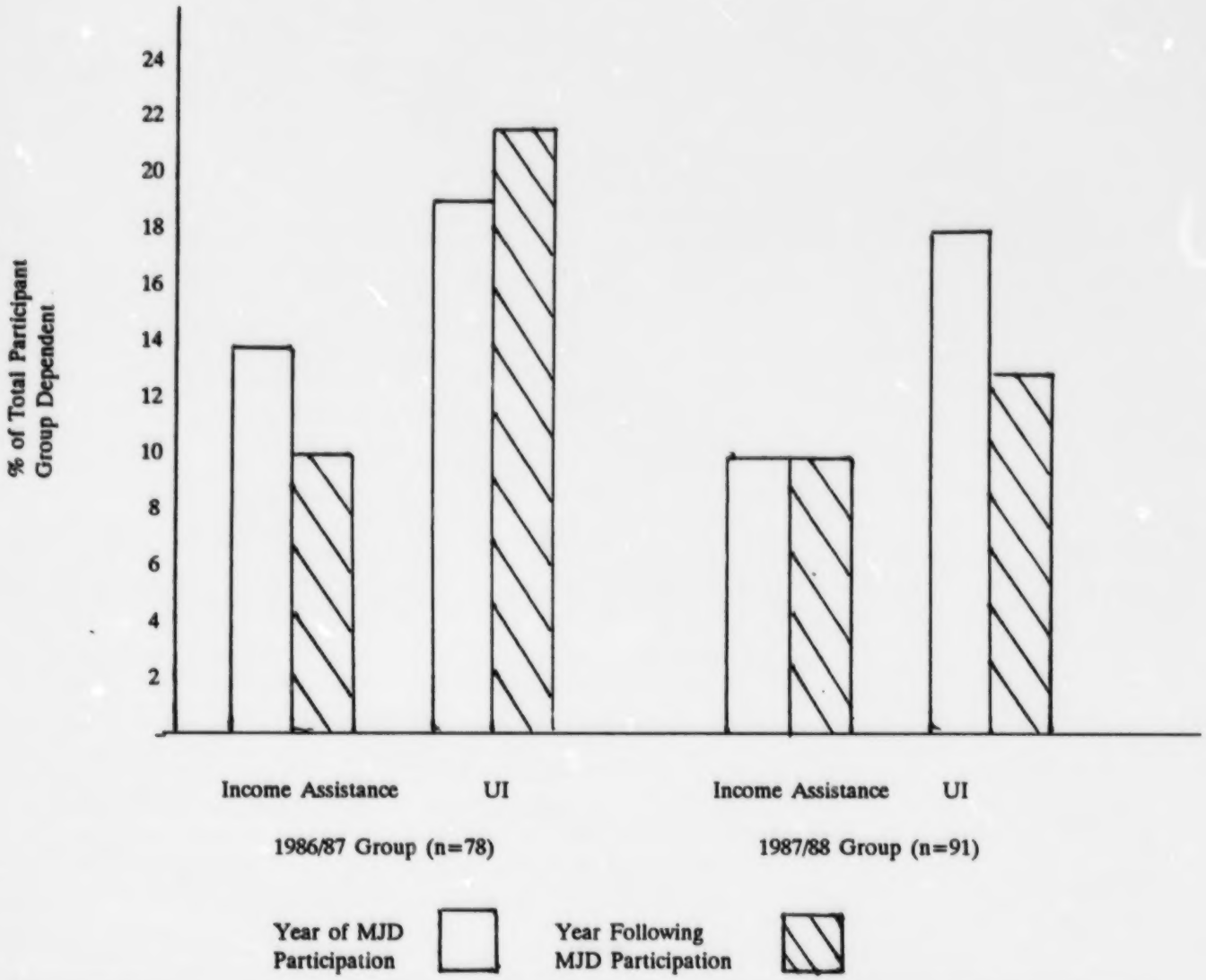


Exhibit 12. Change in Average Weeks and Actual Dollar Levels of UI Dependency Among 1986/87 and 1987/88 MJD Groups

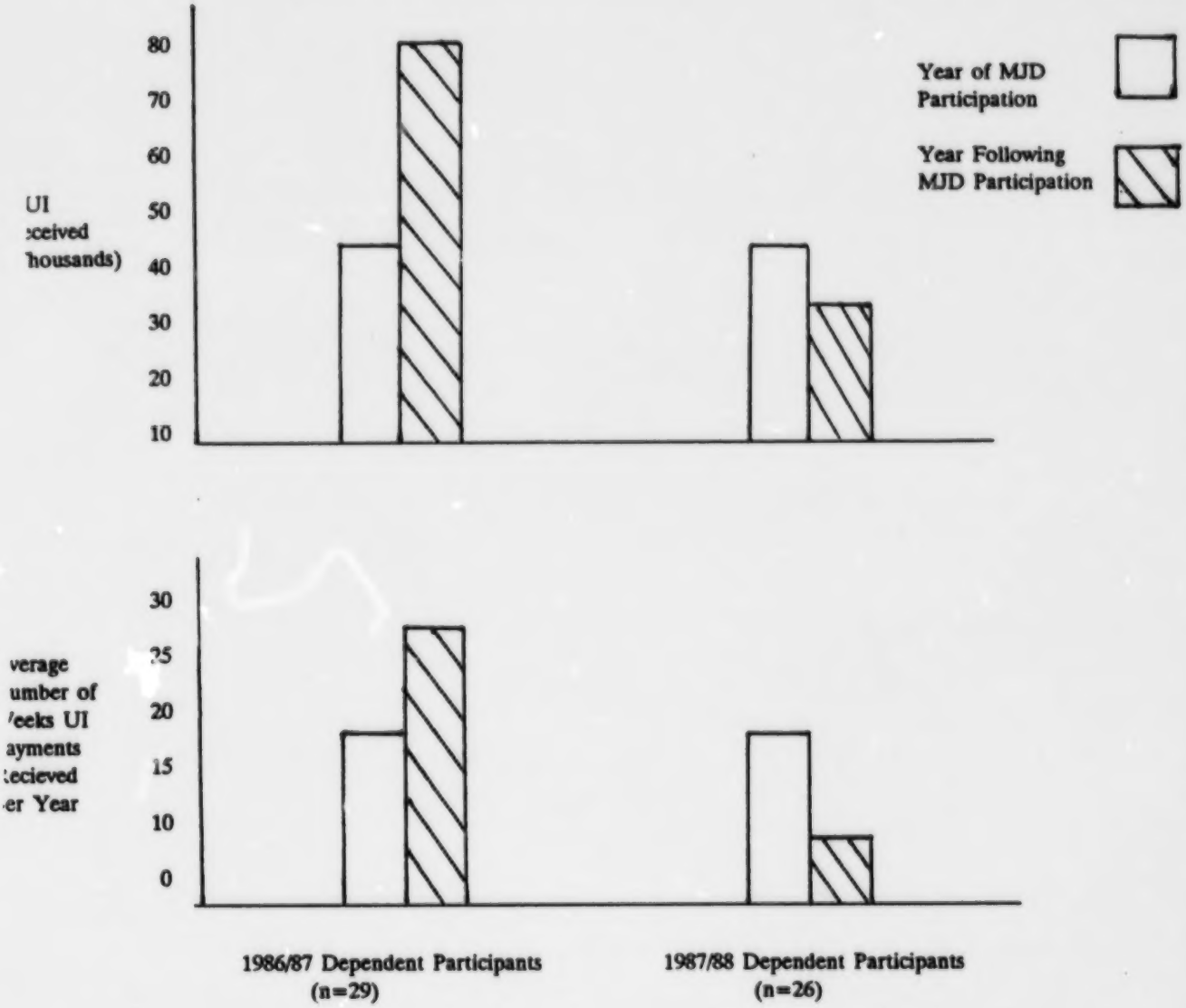


Exhibit 13. Incidence and Extent of Income Assistance Dependence

	MJD Year -2	MJD Year -1	MJD Year	MJD Year +1	MJD Year +2	Total
MJD Class of 86/87						
# of Part.	5	10	11	8	5	39
Average. # Months	8.8	6.1	8.6	8	7.6	7.6
MJD Class of 87/88						
# of Part.	10	10	10	7*	N/A	37
Average. # Months	7.7	6.5	5.9	6.1	N/A	6.6
MJD Class of 88/89						
# of Part.	9	14	14	N/A	N/A	37
Average. # Months	11	7	5.7	N/A	N/A	7.5

N/A = Not Available
* = Does not include data from April 1989

Exhibit 14. Total Income Assistance Dependency for the Three Program Years

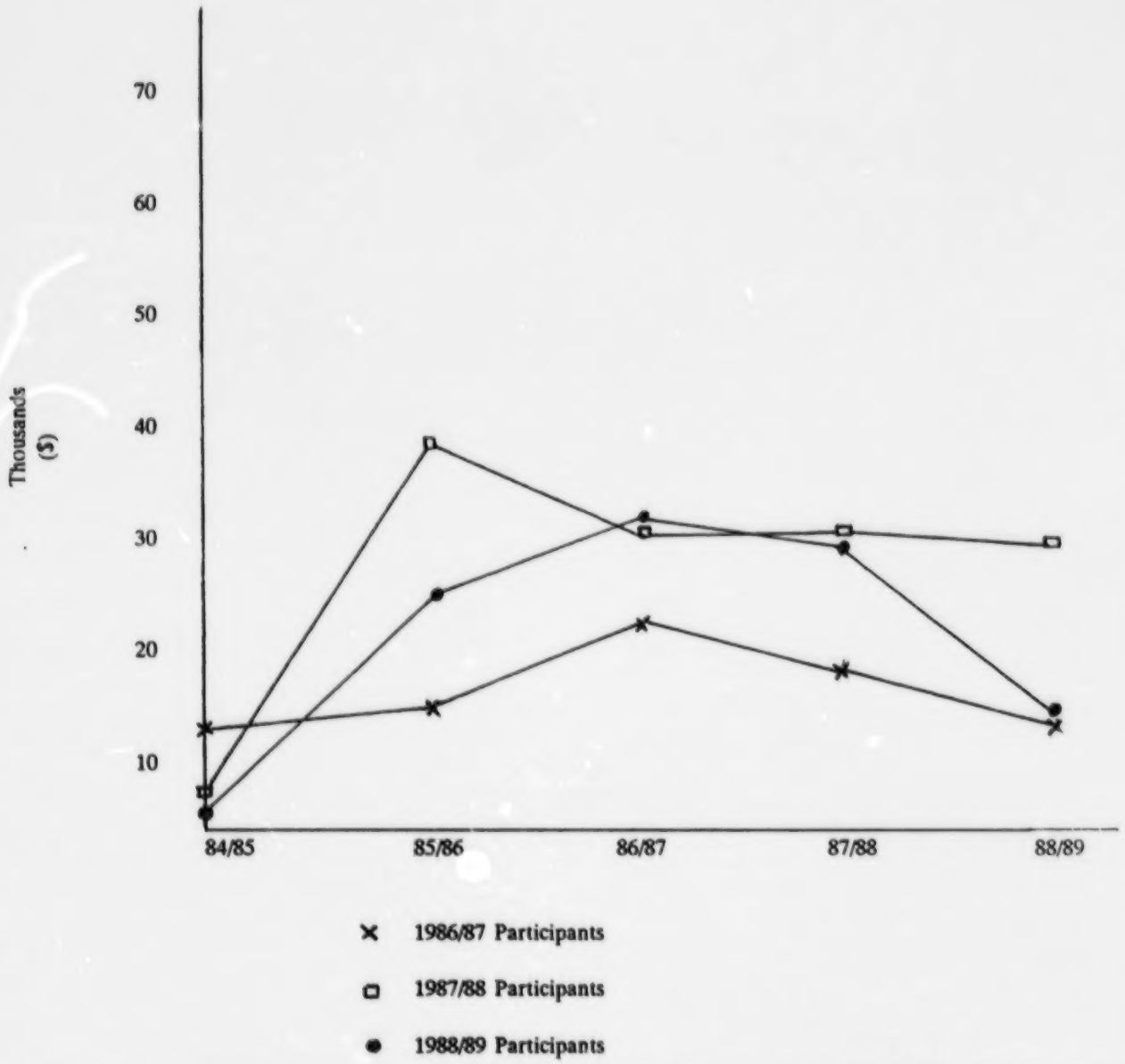


Exhibit 15 presents the questions we researched in order to arrive at the above conclusion. In researching these questions we employed the following methods for data collection:

- a telephone survey of 19 employers;
- a focus group with MJD personnel;
- a telephone survey of participants;
- interviews with MJD personnel; and
- an analysis of program curriculum.

A limitation of the telephone survey of employers was the small size of the sample (19). Of this sample a sub-set of employers had hired a total of approximately 30 MJD participants. The survey tended, therefore, to provide data which was more qualitative in nature but which, nonetheless, provided useful information concerning skill levels.

Exhibit 15. Research Questions Associated with the Evaluation Issue "Did the Training Provided in the Program Correspond to Skills Participants Required: to Gain Employment, to Maintain Employment, and on Program Entry?"

1. What work-related social skills were rated by employers as necessary and sufficient:
   - to gain employment
   - to maintain employed status?
2. Did clients who completed the course demonstrate these skills?
3. To what degree did clients demonstrate these skills on program entry?

Our findings, analysis and conclusions resulting from the above are now presented.

Employers in the Miramichi Want Four Key Skills in Employees

Our telephone survey of employers revealed that they regarded the following skills, in descending order, as the most important for participants to possess in order to be successful employees:

- ability to carry out work responsibilities;
- arriving promptly for work;
- dressing appropriately; and
- keeping employer informed about time off from work.

The skills rated as less important included:

- having grade XII equivalency;
- having sufficient academic training; and
- having sufficient work experience.

Employers indicated their willingness to provide training. They further emphasized the limited level of academic knowledge required to perform the jobs for which they hire. This explains the low priority given to work experience and academic qualifications in the above rankings.

MJD Does Not Clearly Focus on These Skills

We concluded from a review of program documentation that all skills covered in the employer questionnaire and rated as important by employers could be addressed by the MJD program components. These skills were developed:

- in groups life skills and job search sessions;
- in video assisted individual life skills training; and
- through individual counselling by MJD staff.

Group sessions focused on activities such as role playing in work situations, problem solving and general discussions within groups.

The video training addressed similar issues covered in group sessions, but on an individual basis.

Counselling was provided to individuals whenever their actions did not meet the standards associated with MJD participation. The counselling was always tied to the requirements of the workplace. In this manner, it was consistent with the concept of a work environment at the MJD, put forward by the program's personnel.

MJD officials identified for us the key work related skills which they felt were not sufficiently developed in participants prior to program entry. The skills which they identified were as follows:

- showing self-confidence in the work place;
- having sufficient work experience;
- having sufficient academic training;
- following instructions; and
- ability to perform with minimum levels of supervision.

MJD personnel were of the opinion that, upon program entry, as few as 25% of the participants possessed the skills required to function effectively in a work environment.

Two of the skill sets (work experience and academic training) which were emphasized by MJD officials were not rated as "most important" by employers. Two other skills emphasized by MJD officials (following instructions and the ability to perform under minimal levels of supervision) are, in our opinion, related to the ability to carry out work responsibilities. This skill set was rated as most important by employers.

The above suggests to us that MJD officials are not precisely focusing on developing participant skills that employers consider to be the most important although the MJD curriculum covers all of the important, skills.

Participants Did not Perceive MJD to Assist Them in Developing These Skills

In the telephone survey we asked past participants to indicate whether they perceived any positive change in work skills after their MJD participation. Generally, respondents perceived all skills to have been improved. Eighty-six percent rated the MJD as being either "moderately helpful" or "very helpful" in achieving positive change in their overall work related skills.

However, MJD participants reported the program to be "very helpful" in developing only one of the skills rated as important by employers. Specifically, over 60% of the participants rated MJD as "very helpful" in developing their "ability to go to work regularly, despite other problems". We see this skill set as similar to "arriving promptly for work", a skill rated as most important by employers.

Other skills which 60% or more of the participants rated MJD as "very helpful" in developing included:

- working together with other employees; and
- confidence in work (MJD officials rated this as an important skill).

In addition, fewer than 50% of the participants rated MJD as very helpful in developing the following skills:

- getting to and from work. (This was previously identified as a work related barrier for employment disadvantaged persons);
- making necessary arrangements to work (again, a previously identified work related barrier); and
- working with the same level of supervision as others. (This, in our opinion, is related to a skill rated as "most important" by employers).

The above, in our opinion, further emphasizes the divergence between the skills employers feel are important and those emphasized by the program. While MJD curriculum materials reflect all of the skills which employers value highly, MJD staff fail to completely emphasize all of these important skills. MJD participants in turn, fail to recognize the necessary skills from an employer's perspective.

MJD Participants Display a Critical Work Skill Deficit

Our telephone survey asked employers to compare the skills of MJD participants with those of other employees. The intention was to determine if the skill levels of participants were comparable with others in the work force.

In an interval scale of 1 to 6 (1 = very low skill, 6 = very high skill) the employers were asked to rate the skill of the MJD participant and others in their work place. (See Appendix III).

Two areas of deficiency in MJD participants were noted. These are detailed in Exhibit 16 below.

One of the skill sets, "performing with minimal levels of supervision", was rated as very important by employers and by MJD officials. It is not surprising that MJD participants perform lower in this area. It was not rated by them as one

Exhibit 16. Employers Rating of MJD Skill Levels Relative to Others in Their Workforce

	MJD	Workforce
• performing with minimum levels of supervision; and	4.5	5.2
• having sufficient work experience	3.9	4.8

which the program was "very helpful" in developing. This reinforces our previous comments concerning the skill set focus of MJD.

Having sufficient work experience was rated as a less important skill set by employers.

In summary, we concluded that the MJD staff did not sufficiently focus on all of the critical employment related skills which are important to employers. Consequently, participants do not work well under minimal levels of supervision. Evidence to support this conclusion included:

- employers in the Miramichi area want employees to have four key skills more so than others. These skills are:
  - carrying out work responsibilities,
  - arriving at work on time,
  - dressing appropriately, and
  - keeping their employer informed concerning time off requirements.
- MJD has curriculum materials which relate to these four skills. However, MJD officials focus on only one of these four critical skills and on two other skills which are rated as less important by employers;
- the majority of MJD participants rate the program as very helpful in developing only one of the critical skills identified by employers; and
- employers feel that MJD participants do not perform under minimal levels of supervision as well as other (non-MJD) employees. This is a critical skill requirement of employers.

Findings Associated With Costs and Benefits

The evaluation assessment identified three issues central to analyzing the costs and benefits of the MJD project. They address concerns about the incremental benefits, both direct and indirect, of the program as they relate to costs. These were:

- Are there incremental financial benefits for project participants?

- Are there savings to social assistance programs because of participants' involvement in the MJD program?

- Is the MJD program more or less costly than other employment training programs accessible to participants?

Our conclusions to the above issues are now presented and discussed.

ISSUE 5: ARE THERE INCREMENTAL FINANCIAL BENEFITS FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS?

The consultants concluded that there was an increase in income for a sample of participants following participation in the MJD.

Exhibit 17 identifies the question we researched to arrive at the above conclusion.

To research the question associated with this issue we relied on the following methods:

- reviews of UI files to provide an estimate of the yearly working income of participants before and after program participation. We relied on data for year I and II MJD participants which allowed for a comparison of incomes for periods before and after MJD program participation; and

- reviews of MJD financial data to derive estimates of the participant's income during the program.

Exhibit 17. Research Questions Associated with the Evaluation Issue "Are There Incremental Financial Benefits for Project Participants?"

1. What were the income levels of participants:
   - during the course,
   - since course completion, and
   - for an equal period prior to course entry?

To estimate yearly income before and after MJD participation we implemented the following procedure:

- Using the UI claim information, we calculated individuals' earnings per week during their UI qualification period. For each program year we calculated an average employment earnings per week figure.

- This average was then applied to the sample of UI recipients, used earlier in this study, for which program entry and exit dates were available.

- We determined the number of weeks worked in a given year for each individual and used the average weekly income figure to calculate the annual employment income.

- To this we added the amount of UI they received during the same year to arrive at a total yearly income.

- The annual incomes were then averaged.

- The MJD income of individuals was calculated as gross income based on $4.00/hr for 6 hours, 5 days a week for a total of $120 per week.

Our analysis did not involve Income Assistance payments made to MJD participants. This was due to privacy constraints exercised by New Brunswick government officials.

In General, Incomes Increase After MJD Participation

Exhibit 18 displays the average income of participants before, during and after their participation in the MJD.

In general, Exhibit 18 suggests that income tended to increase following program participation. For year I income increased from an average of $4,557 to $7237 and to $8574 in the year two after participation. Similarly, for year II MJD participants income increased to $9292 from $7,070 during the program.

However, it is not clear whether income after the MJD increased relative to income in the years before individuals were involved in the program. For example in Year I, MJD participants in 1985/86 earned $9908 compared to $7237 in 1987/88, the year after their MJD participation.

Some of the Income Increase Evidenced Is Due to UI Payments

Exhibit 19 illustrates the percentage of UI participants received as a proportion of their total income.

Comparing Exhibit 19 with Exhibit 18 shows a relationship between the percentage of UI and the level of average income. In most cases, the less the increase in annual income, the higher the proportion of UI as a part of the income. In short, some of the increase in income following MJD particpation was due to increased eligibility for and payment of UI benefits.

Our conclusion on this issue is qualified as a result of two data limitations. First, we estimated average annual income using a sample size of 18. This represents only 11% of all MJD participants in the two program years. Second, the data reflects a short term trend, limited by the availability of longer term data.

We concluded that MJD participants show an incremental increase in average income after program participation. However, in some instances part of the increase was due to UI payments. Evidence related to this conclusion included:

- income levels of the 1986/87 and 1987/88 MJD participants increased in the years following the program.

- income levels following the program were not always greater than before program entry.

- UI payments contributed to income levels.

The strength of our conclusion concerning income changes of the MJD participants is limited.

Exhibit 18. Estimated Average Yearly Income of MJD Participants

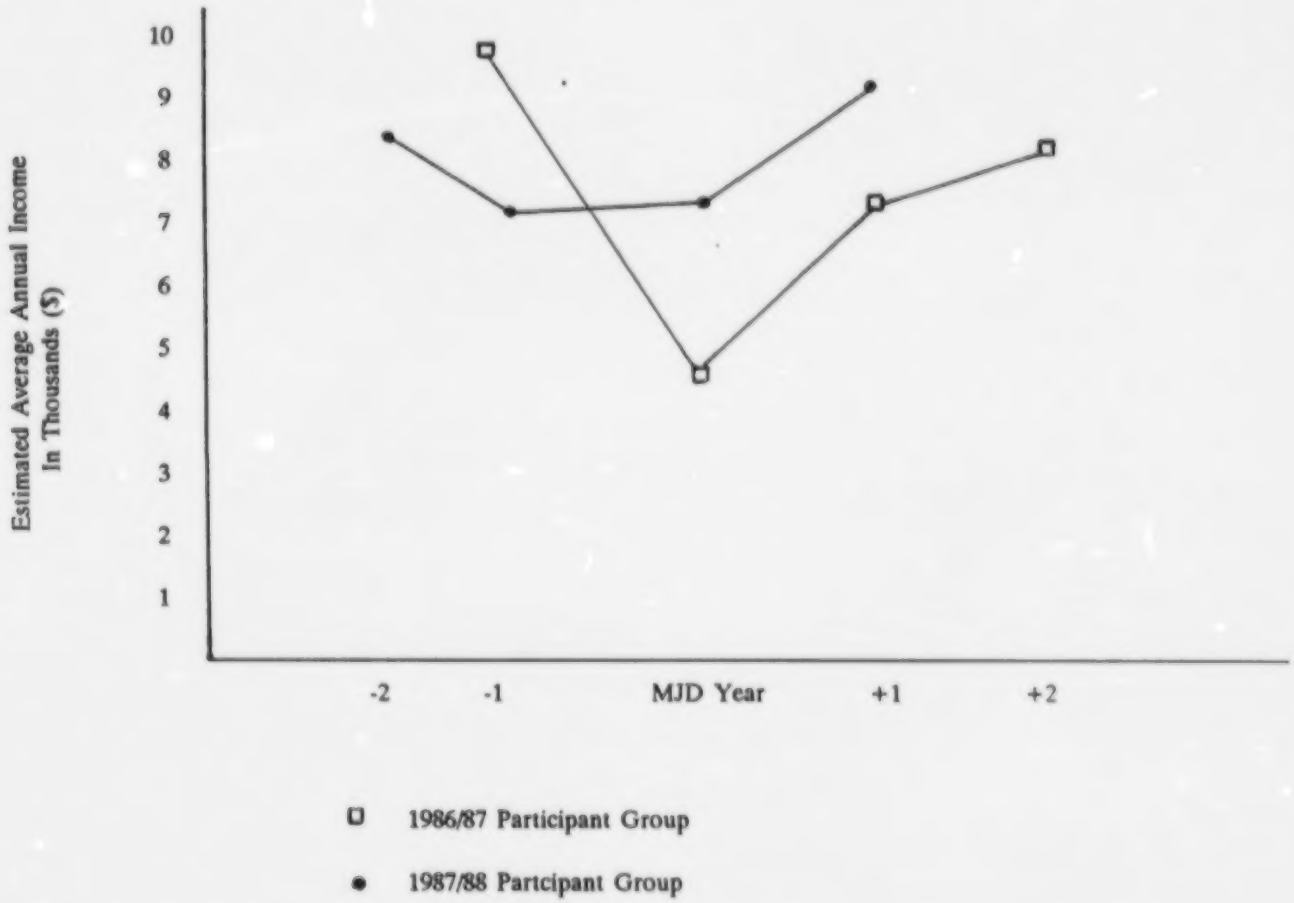
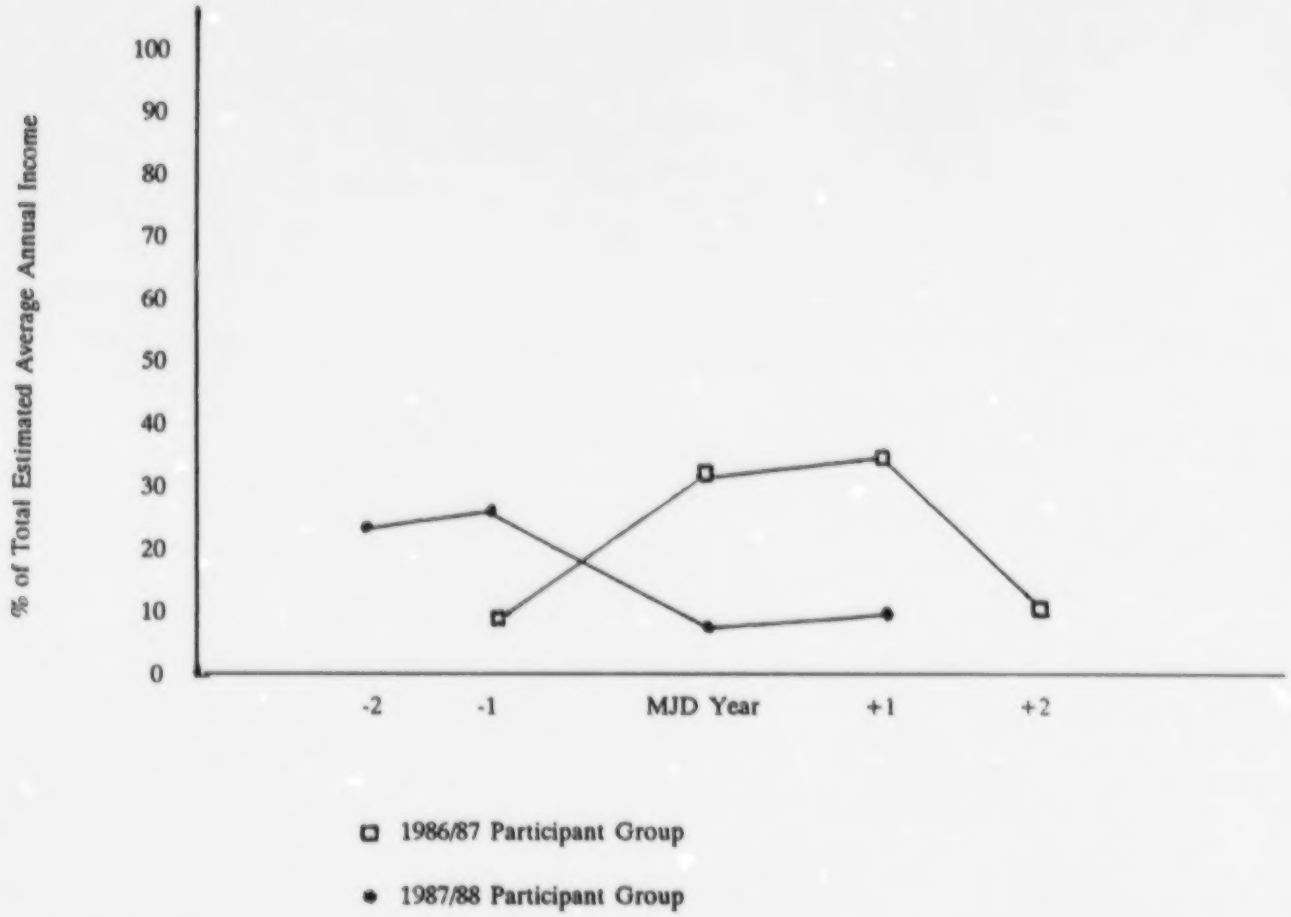


Exhibit 19. Income Received From UIC as a Percentage of Total Income



ISSUE 6: ARE THERE SAVINGS TO SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS BECAUSE OF PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE MJD PROGRAM?

While our data is limited to observations about short term trends, the consultants concluded that there do not appear to be overall savings to social assistance programs as a result of participants' involvement in MJD.

Exhibit 20 details the question we researched to allow us to conclude on this issue.

Exhibit 20. Research Question Associated with the Evaluation Issue "Are There Savings to Social Assistance Programs Because of Client Participation?"

1. Do SAR's demonstrate a reduction in social assistance payments received following course completion?

To arrange our data in a manner that would allow for synthesis, we calculated the aggregate payment levels ($) for Income Assistance and UIC for participants from all three program years.

Reductions in Income Support Costs are Not Linked To the Program

Exhibits 21 and 22 display these payment levels of the 1986/87 MJD participant group.

Similar displays for the 1987/88 and 1988/89 program years are attached in Appendix IV.

Our analysis of this information indicates:

- total income assistance disbursements tended to rise to a peak level (usually occurring in 1986/87) during the five year period, then declined gradually. These decreases did not appear to coincide with the year of program participation. Therefore, there appeared to be no distinct effect of program involvement on reducing total Income Assistance disbursements.

- total UIC disbursements are also at or near their peak during 1986/87. Having peaked, the rate of reduction appears to be gradual but steady;

- while the data shows a downward trend in income support payments over the two most recent fiscal years, the levels are substantively higher than in 1984/85 and 1985/86;

- it does not appear that MJD participation is a significant factor contributing to a reduction in income support payments; and

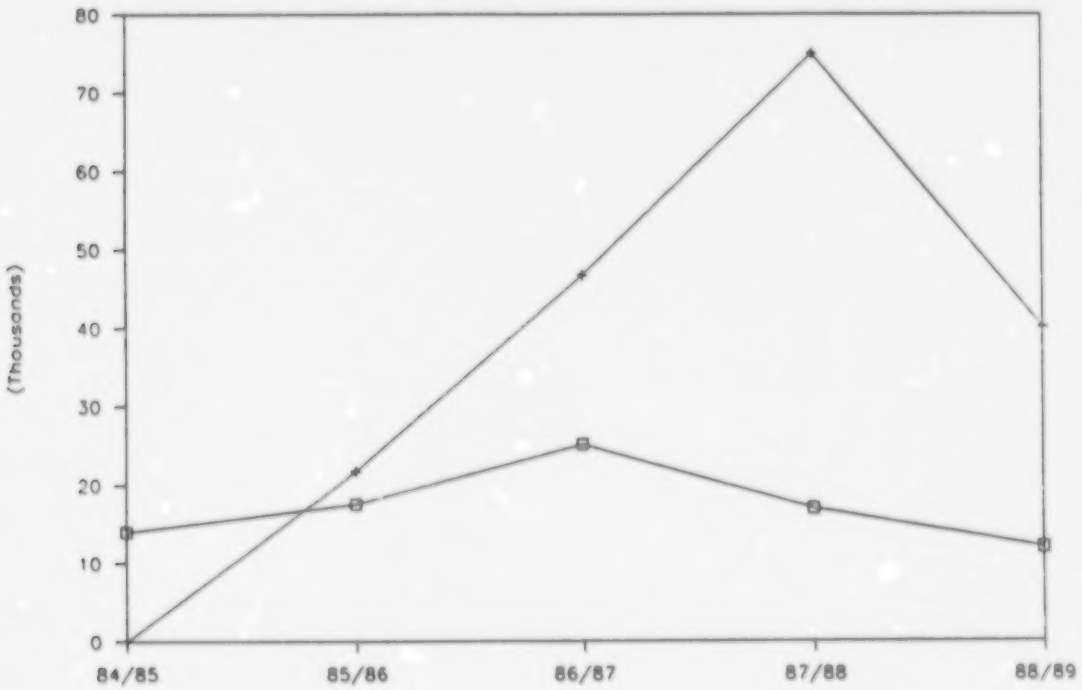
- it is evident that broader economic factors have contributed to especially high levels of Income Assistance and UIC payments during the 1986/87 fiscal years.

Exhibit 23 supports these findings. It displays the total income support payment levels for all three program years. Overall, as indicated in this Exhibit, the costs of income support programs in Miramichi have increased since 1983/84. We feel that this can be explained by two factors. These are now discussed.

Participant Age May Have Contributed to the Longer Term Increases In Income Support Costs Evidenced in Miramichi

The demographics of the participant group may contribute to the overall trend in increased costs for income support reported above.

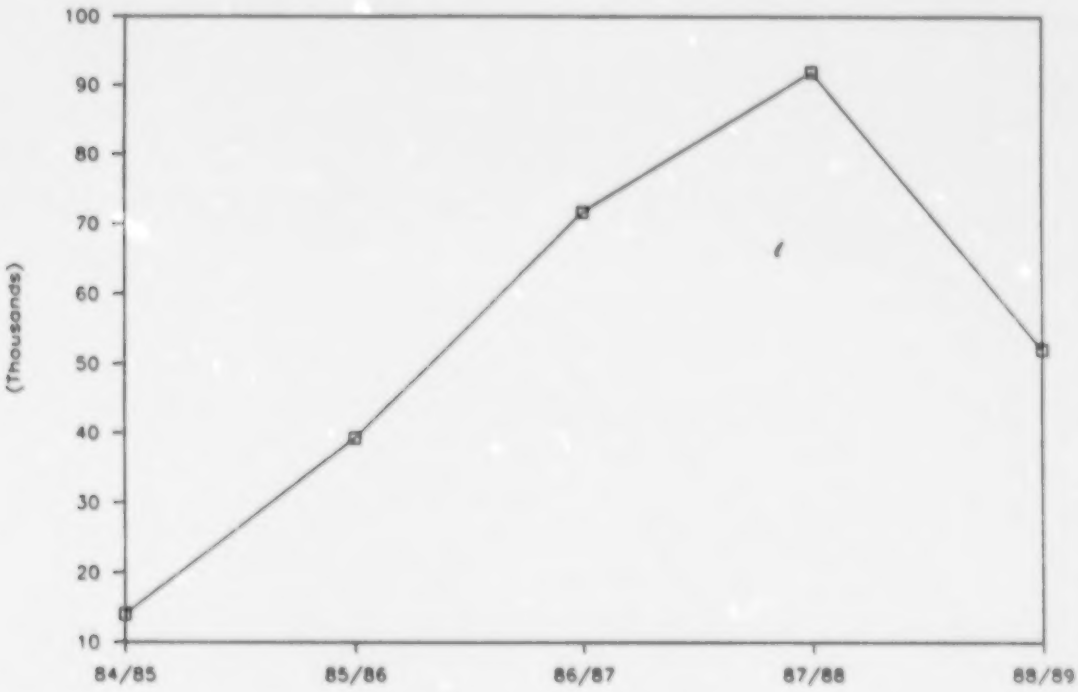
Exhibit 21. Income Assistance and Unemployment Insurance Dependency of a Sample of Year 1 MJD Participants



□ Income Assistance Levels

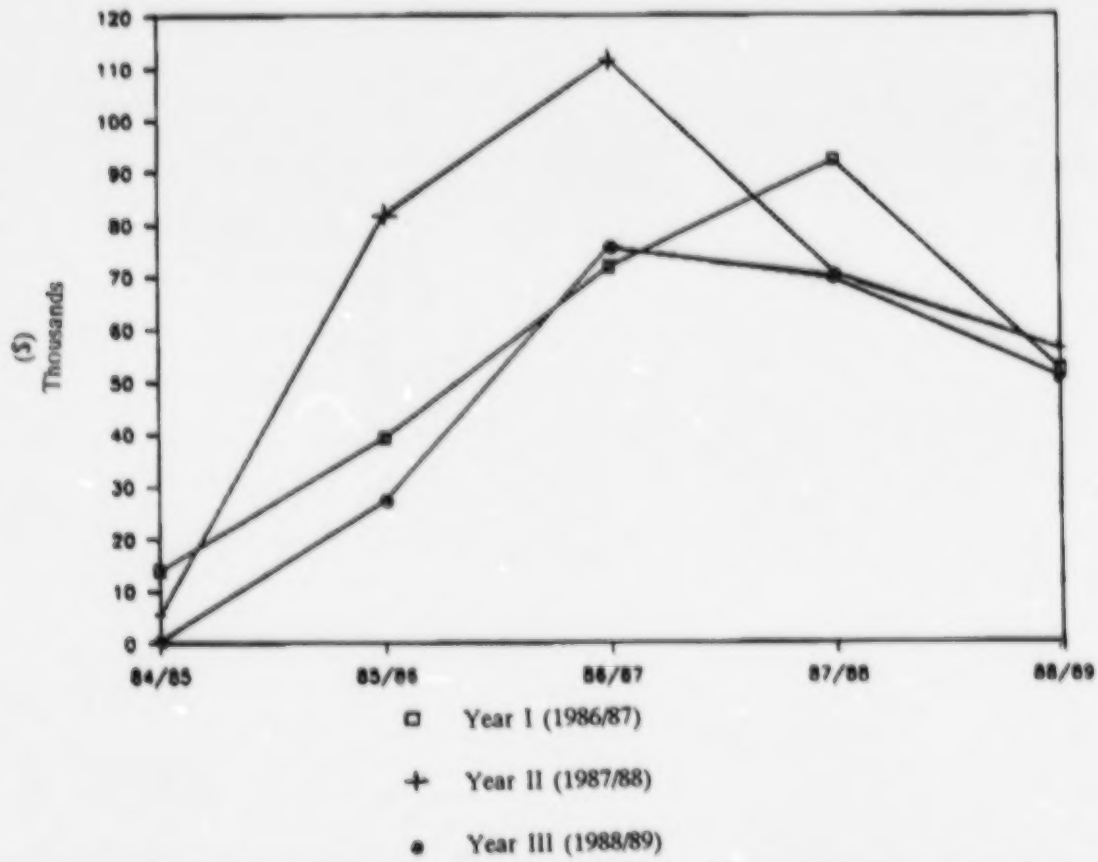
X Unemployment Insurance Levels

Exhibit 22 Total Dependency Levels For a Sample of Year I MJD Participants



UIC and Income Assistance

Exhibit 23. Total UIC and Income Assistance ($) For The Three Program Years



Thirty-two percent of our survey respondents reported their age to be 24 years or younger. This would mean that in 1984/85 one third of our participants surveyed would have been under the age of 19. It is our view that small proportions of this sub-sample would be financially independent. Many would have still been reliant on their adult care-givers and would not be receiving income support.

The Economy of the Miramichi Was the Primary Contributor to Longer Term Increased Income Support Costs

An interview with an official from Chatham/Newcastle EIC office revealed that employment opportunities in the year 1986/87 were depressed due to the completion of Phase I of a mega project. Phase II did not begin until 1988. As a result, the area experienced a general reduction in the number of employment opportunities and a surplus of labour on the market. This, in our opinion, led to

increased dependency levels and the increased income support levels we observed.

Miramichi Job Development participants are, as indicated earlier in this report, marginally employed. The employment opportunities they target are within sectors of the economy that are extremely sensitive to economic changes. In 1986/87 MJD participants would have been confronted with diminishing employment opportunities and increasing competition for available jobs. As a consequence, they would have to rely on income support mechanisms to meet their basic needs during this time.

We concluded that MJD does not contribute to an overall saving to social assistance programs and to other income support programs. Changes in the costs of these programs appear to be due to broader economic factors. Evidence to support this conclusion included:

- over the longer term income support payments made to MJD participants have increased;
- any shorter term reduction in the costs do not appear to be related to program participation; and
- increase in income support costs in the Miramichi region since 1986/87 are due to other more significant economic factors.

ISSUE 7: IS THE MJD PROGRAM MORE OR LESS COSTLY THAN OTHER EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS ACCESSIBLE TO PARTICIPANTS?

The consultants concluded that the Miramichi Job Development has lower per diem seat rates than the program alternatives we assessed.

Exhibit 24 details the question we researched in our investigation of this issue.

We used the following methods to collect information on this issue:

- reviews of MJD financial information; and
- reviews of Employment and Immigration Canada files on alternative employability enhancement programs in the Newcastle/Chatham area.

Our findings, analysis and conclusions resulting from the above are now presented.

MJD Per Diem Costs Ranged From $13 - $17

Exhibit 25 details the per participant and per diem costs over three operating years of the MJD. Per diem costs were the highest in the first and third years of the program and lowest in year II.

Interviews with the MJD manager indicated that first year costs were higher because start-up expenditures for equipment, books, furniture, software etc. were required.

It is not clear why year III per diem costs were higher than year II. In year II salaries were paid to 5 staff members and staff development/training costs of the program's personnel were covered by the MJD. In year III only 4 staff worked at the MJD and development/training costs were not paid for by the program.

Since staff salaries account for a high percentage of the MJD's budget (42% in 1987/88) one might have expected year III per diem costs to have been lower than year II. This, in fact, was not the case. MJD officials were unable to explain this cost difference to us.

In general, per diem costs for participants in all three years of the MJD ranged from approximately $13 to $17.

Exhibit 24. Research Questions Associated with the Evaluation Issue "Is This Program More of Less Costly Than Other Employment Training Programs Accessible to Participants?"

1. Is the participant cost or per seat diem cost more, less or equal to the costs of similar employment training programs sponsored by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) within the Chatham/Newcastle area?.

Exhibit 25. Analysis of MJD Per Diem Costs

Participants	Budget	Participant Cost ($)	Per Diem Costs/ Participant ($)
Year I (ending April 24, 1987)			
74 who completed	338,260.00	4,571.00	17.60
78 who started		4,337.00	16.70
Year II (ending April 22, 1988)			
81 who completed	301.519.00	3,722.00	14.31
91 who started		3,313.00	12.70
Year III (April 25 - January 27, 1989)			
61 who completed	200,181.00	3,282.00	16.80
66 who started		3,033.00	15.50

Most of the Alternative Programs Were More Expensive Than MJD

Exhibit 26 details the per diem and average participant costs of the five alternative programs we reviewed.

A comparison of these costs with those of the MJD shows that in four of the five programs the per diem costs were higher.

Exhibit 26. Analysis of Alternative Program Per Diem Costs

Program Name	Date of Program	Per Diem Costs ($)	Average Participant Costs ($)
Multi-Occupational Skills	1988	21.00	3,070.00
Job Entry (General Occupation)	1987	10.00	1,820.00
Manager Trainee Training	1988	24.00	3,070.00
Parts persons/ Inventory/ Warehousing Training Program	1987	24.00	3,090.00
Hospitality Training	1988	34.00	2,750.00

In our opinion a major contributing element of increased per diem cost of these four alternatives was the profit to the delivery agency. These four programs were delivered by private sector agencies.

An analysis of a private sector proposal submission approved by Employment and Immigration Canada revealed that one additional program cost (instructor's salary) was significantly higher than MJD (by $10,000).

Overall, the four more expensive alternative programs cost between $5 and $18 per day per participant more than the MJD program.

In summary, we concluded that MJD has lower per diem seat costs than other program alternatives in the area. Evidence in support of this conclusion included:

- MJD per diem costs ranged from $13 - $17 over a three year period;
- this is $5 - $18 less expensive (per diem) than most other employment related programs in the area; and
- these increased costs are due to profit and overhead factors.

Findings Analysis and Conclusions Associated With Alternatives Issues

Issues relating to alternatives are concerned with whether or not the same or greater level of effectiveness of government expenditures can be achieved through alternative processes. These alternatives may include more efficient ways of delivering the same program or the identification of different kinds of programs which achieve the same objectives.

The following two alternatives issues were examined:

- If the duration of the program were to be reduced, which components/ activities would be maintained?
- What are the advantages of the "employment" vs. "training" focus of the MJD program?

Our conclusions to the above issues are now presented and discussed.

ISSUE 8: IF THE DURATION OF THE PROGRAM WERE TO BE REDUCED, WHICH COMPONENTS/ACTIVITIES WOULD BE MAINTAINED

We concluded that computer assisted academic training could be eliminated as a program activity with no detrimental impact on MJD effectiveness.

Exhibit 27 presents the question we researched in order to arrive at the above conclusion.

In researching these questions we employed the following methods for data collection:

- focus group discussions with MJD personnel; and
- a telephone survey of participants.

During the focus group and interviews, we solicited the views of past participants and MJD personnel on the relative effectiveness of each of the program's component activities on employability enhancement. A consistently lower rating of a particular program activity indicated to us that this activity was less important than others to the overall goal of MJD.

Through the focus group process, MJD personnel rated the impact or contribution of program activities on improving the chances of a participant:

- gaining employment;
- maintaining employment; and
- successfully completing employment training after leaving the MJD.

Exhibit 27. Research Questions Association with the Evaluation Issue "If the Duration of the Program Were to be Reduced Which Components/Activities Should be Maintained?"

1. What is perceived to be the relative weighting of the effectiveness of each major program component?

Computer assisted academic training was rated the lowest in its contribution to enhancing a participant's chances of gaining and maintaining employment.

The computer assisted lifeskill and job search training were perceived to be the next least important program activities in this regard.

In the participant telephone survey respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the program in improving their skills to find and keep employment. Computer assisted academic training was rated the lowest in both categories.

It is evident that computer assisted academic training was not regarded as an important activity in preparing MJD participants to enter the job market.

The contribution of computer assisted academic training was recognized as more substantial in preparing participants for further employment training. This suggested contribution is, in our opinion, negated by three factors previously discussed in this report. These factors are:

- the low proportion of MJD participants who go on to further training (11%);
- the low emphasis put on academic skill by local employers; and
- the availability of GED tutoring at NBCC.

Based upon our analysis of this data, we concluded that the computer assisted academic training activity could be eliminated from the program. Evidence in support of this conclusion included:

- most of the academic training was a "relearning" for participants;
- this activity was rated as the lowest among the program features in enhancing employability by MJD staff and participants; and
- employers do not rate academic skill as a critical employment related requirement.

ISSUE 9: WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF THE "EMPLOYMENT" VS. "TRAINING" FOCUS OF THE MJD PROGRAM?

The consultants concluded that the "employment focus" of the MJD has merit and should be strengthened. This is especially so in light of the proliferation of "training focused" alternatives that are operating in the Newcastle/Chatham area.

Exhibit 28 outlines the questions we researched in relation to this issue.

We used the following research methods to gather information relevant to this issue:

- reviews of MJD program descriptions;
- a telephone survey of participants;
- a focus group session with MJD personnel;

Exhibit 28. Research Questions Associated with the Evaluation Issue "What are the Advantages of the "Employment" vs. "Training" Focus of the Program?"

1. What are the employment focused features of the program?
2. How are the features perceived to contribute to course effectiveness.
3. What alternative activities would be implemented by a "training" institution if a program were to be operated by this institution (i.e. community college or adult learning centre)?
4. What changes in program effectiveness could result from implementing these alternatives?

- interviews with EIC, Community College officials and training experts;
- a risk analysis provided by a Panel of Experts; and
- reviews of alternative program documentation.

<u>The Employment Focus Did Not Have As Great An Impact On Participants As MJD Staff Perceived</u>

The Evaluation Assessment refers to the MJD program as "employment focused". This focus is characterized by the following:

- participants are subject to many of the rigours and discipline associated with employment (i.e. punctuality, appropriate dress);
- participants are paid a wage;
- MJD is located in an office building in a business district; and
- participants are told to look at MJD participation as a job - not as training.

The purpose of the employment focus is to give MJD participants experience coping with the responsibilities, expectations and rigours associated with the employee/employer relationship.

MJD program staff regarded the employment focus of MJD as an important dimension of the program. They perceived that the employment focus had a significant impact on the participants.

The staff rated "treating participants as employees" and "reinforcing the guidelines" as more significant components of the focus than "the location of MJD in a business district" or "the payment of wages".

Contrary to the perceptions of staff, 75% of the survey respondents perceived the program as a training course or academic upgrading as opposed to a job.

The 25% of the participants who considered MJD participation to be a job referred to the following characteristics of the program as representative of this perception. They:

- had to work regular office hours and be there regularly;
- had to work effectively with others and supervisors;
- had to perform assigned tasks; and
- had to dress appropriately.

In general, it appears that the effort of MJD staff to reinforce the "employment focus" did not have the intended significant impact on the participants' perception of the program.

A Change in Program Management is Imminent

At the time of our evaluation study, negotiations were being conducted between the MJD manager, New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) officials and the Department of Income Assistance to confirm the future funding arrangements and program direction of MJD.

Interviews were conducted with various officials, including those from the NBCC, to determine what changes might occur in the program as a result of alternative delivery arrangements.

NBCC officials indicated that they did not anticipate major alterations in the structure of the program or a change in its location in the immediate future. It was evident that changes would occur in the operating environment of the program. Specifically:

- Funding for the program will be on a fee-for-service basis.
- NBCC intends to establish a referral system with the Department of Income Assistance for program participants. If this is successful, all program participants will be SAR's.
- The NBCC will implement aptitude and assessment testing of participants.
- The program will have a "training" orientation, which reflects the culture of the NBCC.
- The NBCC will take a less rigid approach to "problem situations" with students, relying on counselling to resolve difficulties. Dismissals of participants from the program will be subject to the College's appeal procedure.

To assess the probable effect of these changes on the program, we conducted a risk analysis using a panel of employability enhancement stakeholders (a Panel of Experts) from within the Newcastle region. The results of this risk analysis are now discussed.

The "Employment Focus" Contributes Most to the Participants' Ability to Gain Employment

The Panel of Experts were of the opinion that the "employment focus" at MJD had merit, but were not convinced that it would improve employability any more than a "training focused program".

The following elements of MJD's "employment focus" were rated, by the panel, as contributing most significantly to gaining employment:

- requiring appropriate employment dress. The panel concluded that the need to present a good image, through appropriate dress, was a primary contributor to an individual being able to gain employment;

- having participant payments referred to as a wage. The panel reasoned that the receipt of a "wage" gave a sense of accomplishment to MJD participants. It was concluded that this factor could reduce feelings of social stigmatization related to dependence on Income Assistance and could ultimately serve as a motivational factor for participants to remain "employed"; and

- maintaining discipline and sanctions sometimes including termination from the program. Discipline and sanctions give participants an understanding of and appreciation for employer expectations of employee behaviour in the workplace.

The panel perceived the above to be valuable elements of employability enhancement initiatives.

They did not conclude, however, that a "training focused" program would reduce the effectiveness of these elements of the MJD program. Panel members suggested the following concerning the anticipated NBCC involvement in the program:

- while participation will not be akin to "working at a job", the actual curriculum of MJD will remain unchanged;

- the loss of UIC eligibility and the potential reduction in motivation because of this would be somewhat mitigated by the fact that the "training allowance" can be greater than the $4.00/hr wage received by MJD participants;

- the requirement for appropriate dress would remain; and

- discipline and sanctions including potential termination is a part of NBCC's current policy, therefore, this requirement would be maintained.

The consultants feel that there are distinct and important differences between the "employment focus" of MJD and the "training focus" of NBCC. These differences may be subtle, but, in our opinion, they are significant. We now briefly discuss these differences as we perceive them to be.

At MJD the Project Manager is the ultimate authority regarding a participant's continuation in the program. At the Community College, the Principal must make the decision to terminate a student. The decision of the Principal is subject to appeal.

It is the view of the consultants that this difference in dismissal procedures will serve to reduce the impact of a disciplinary action as it pertains to long term behavioral change in a participant.

We are of this opinion for the following reasons:

- perceptually, it is more significant to be fired as an employee than dismissed as student;
- MJD participants are in close daily contact with the individual who has the authority to fire them. Students at NBCC are not in close daily contact with the person who has the authority to dismiss them; and
- the decision of the Project Manager to terminate participation in MJD is final and irrevocable. At NBCC, the decision to dismiss a student is subject to an elaborate appeal process.

Second, the consultants are of the opinion that a further shift in the perception of MJD participants regarding their "status" will occur. Participants are more likely to perceive themselves as " becoming prepared for the job market" rather than as having "employee status". We believe that "employee status" with its benefits (i.e. UIC eligibility etc.) is more attractive than is "student status".

Thirdly, it is our opinion that this will impact most significantly and negatively on SAR's who are, by definition, at risk in terms of self image and perceptual set.

Finally, given that the target group of the MJD will be limited to SAR's in the future, we conclude that these changes will have a negative impact on the effectiveness of MJD.

In summary, we concluded that the employment focus of the program enhanced employment, was unique in the region and should be strengthened. Evidence in support of this conclusion included:

- the employment focus was perceived by MJD staff as contributing the most to gaining employment;
- while MJD staff and employers rated the employment focus of the program as significant, participants perceived it as a "training" program;
- other employment enhancement programs in the region have a training focus;
- while the focus will shift from employment to training if the local Community College delivers MJD, not everyone felt that the effectiveness of the program would be reduced; and
- we feel that there is sufficient rationale to suggest that program effectiveness will be diminished under such circumstances.

This concludes the discussion of our findings, analysis and conclusions associated with the issues researched in our evaluation study of the Miramichi Job Development Program.

In the next section we present our overall conclusions concerning MJD.

3.
OVERALL CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING MJD

Overall, we were impressed with the program. MJD is a successful response to a critical condition in the Miramichi region. It provides employment disadvantaged persons with an opportunity to gain the skills necessary to find employment. In the final analysis the high majority of the clients complete the training requirements and find employment all within a relatively short period.

To its credit, MJD accomplishes this outcome under conditions which are challenging at best. That is:

- most of the MJD clients are women and are young persons who have extremely limited occupational training, an unreliable work history, and demonstrate multiple barriers to employment;
- in addition, many are single mothers and a high number of these persons receive social assistance support;
- the economy of the region has been extremely depressed over a long period; and
- other occupational training programs in the immediate area provide an abundance of trained persons who compete with MJD clients for the jobs which become available.

In spite of these challenges, MJD demonstrates an extremely high success rate. Approximately 90% of those completing the program find employment.

While MJD officials, sponsors and participants should be commended for this outcome, there were a limited number of the program features which were of concern to us. These include the following:

- Participants do not show an increased ability to maintain the jobs they secure after completing MJD. A tendency exists in similar programs and economic environments to develop a complacent belief that only short term jobs are available to and can be gained by participants. We are not satisfied that these are the only type of jobs available to MJD participants. Nor are we satisfied that an acceptable level of success has been achieved by MJD officials in seeking out these opportunities and guiding participants to them.
- MJD does not adequately focus on the employment barriers of SAR's. Throughout its history, MJD has worked closely with provincial Income Assistance officials. As well, Employment and Immigration Canada refers clients to and funds the program. This special relationship with Income Assistance officials, has led to many Social Assistance Recipients (SAR's) being participants of the program.

Nevertheless, the program contains no elements, activities or features which purposely respond to the higher intensity at which SAR's experience employment related barriers. We understand that program officials do not wish to devalue SAR's by focusing on them as a special needs group of participants. However, we feel that the special employment needs of SAR's can be met in a professional and sensitive manner.

- MJD also does not adequately focus on the critical employment related skills needed by employers. While the program has sufficient resources to develop these skills, they are only developing one or two of them to an acceptable level. The program does, however, develop less important skills. There is no congruence between the skills employers rate as the most important, the participants' skills staff feel are the most deficient on program entry (and, therefore, the ones focused on in the program) and the skills which participants feel are assisted the most by the program. We feel that this divergence is most evident in the areas of academic and social skills. Staff and students rate these as a priority, employers do not. We are of the opinion that the program should increase its emphasis on those skills employers consider to be critical. This could lead to the elimination of the academic training element of MJD.

Our final major conclusion concerns the value of the "employment focus" of the program. Relative to other employment enhancement programs in the area, MJD is characterized by an employment atmosphere as opposed to a training environment. This is an intended feature of the program. We found evidence that this emphasis enhances program effectiveness especially in job finding outcomes. We also found evidence that participants do not completely perceive this focus and we concluded that the focus should be strengthened.

This employment focus will be at risk if either of the following occur:

- the local Community College delivers the program; and/or
- UI eligibility benefits cannot be gained by participants.

Both of the above changes are probable. We feel that any arrangements for the Community College to deliver the program should include adjustments in the normal operating procedures of the College to accommodate the employment focus of MJD. We further feel that the UIC eligibility conditions of the program should not be changed.

This concludes our report on the evaluation of the MJD. Our findings and conclusions are supportive of the initiative and provide direction for its improvement.